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ABSTRACT

This program activity guide consists of information Air Force preschool teachers and child caregivers can use to increase young children's understanding of the meaning of flags in general and the flag of the United States in particular. (Author/RH)

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UNITED STATES AIR FORCE CHILD CARE PROGRAM

PROGRAM ACTIVITY GUIDE

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This guide is one in a series designed to help teachers and caregivers in Air Force preschools and child care centers plan activities for children. It was prepared by HQ AFMPC/MPCSOB, with assistance from Ms Yolanda Molina and Ms Linda Brant, child development consultants.

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F L A G S

1. BASIC INFORMATION NEEDED BY TEACHER/CAREGIVER.

The flag of a nation is a stirring sight as it flies in the breeze. The bright colors and design stand for the country's land, its citizens, its government, and its ideals. A country's flag can cause people to feel joy, to have courage, and to sacrifice. People have died in order to protect their national flag from dishonor and disgrace.

There are many kinds of flags besides national ones. Presidents, kings, queens, and government officials have their own flags. Every state in the United States has a flag. Some flags stand for international organizations such as the United Nations and the Red Cross. The Olympics, Girl Scouts, and Boy Scouts all have special flags. Flags represent ideas such as christianity and peace. Some flags are used only by the military and some flags are used to send messages. Sailors use flags to relay messages from ship to ship. Flags are also used as warnings.

Most national flags use one or more of only seven basic colors. These colors are red, white, blue, green, yellow, black, and orange. The colors were all used in heraldry, a system of designs that began during the Middle Ages. Years of history lie behind the colors of most flags. Denmark has used the same national flag for more than 750 years.

The "Stars and Stripes" is the most popular name for the red, white, and blue flag of the United States of America. No one knows where this name came from. Francis Scott Key called the American flag the "Star-Spangled Banner" in 1814 when he wrote the poem that later became the national anthem. A Massachusetts sea captain gave the name "Old Glory" to the flag in 1824. The stars and stripes stand for the land, the people, the government, and the ideals of the United States.

No one knows who designed the United States flag. It was approved by the Continental Congress on 14 June 1777. Tradition gives credit for designing the American flag to Betsy Ross, but historians doubt that this is accurate. The stripes in the flag stand for the 13 original colonies. The Continental Congress also stated that the flag should have 13 stars. As each new state joined the Union, a stripe and a star were added to the flag. It soon became apparent that the flag would be too cluttered. In 1818, Congress set the number of stripes at 13 again. It also ordered a new star to be added to the flag on the July 4th after a state joined the Union. The present day flag has 13 stripes and 50 stars.

Flag Day is celebrated on 14 June in memory of the day in 1777 when the Continental Congress made the stars and stripes

the official flag of America. On Flag Day in the United States people display the flag and honor the flag with special programs.

The flag should be honored as a symbol of the nation it represents. Owning a flag and displaying it properly are signs of patriotism and respect. When displaying the American flag, always give it the position of honor. Put it to the right of other flags, in front of other flags, or higher than other flags. (EXCEPTIONS: The United Nations flag flies above all flags at United Nations Headquarters in New York City and the church pennant flies above the United States flag while naval chaplains conduct services at sea.)

When the flag is raised or lowered as part of a ceremony or when it passes by in a parade or review, everyone should face the flag and stand at attention. Persons in military uniform should give a hand salute. Other persons honor the flag by placing the right hand over the heart.

The American flag is also honored by the "Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag." The pledge is a promise to be loyal and true to America. United States citizens give the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag by holding the right hand over the heart. Persons in uniform salute for the pledge.

The United States flag is usually displayed outdoors only in good weather. It is flown between sunrise and sunset. It can be flown at night if a spotlight is on it. The flag should never be allowed to touch the floor or ground. Keep the flag clean. Wash it or have it dry-cleaned when it is soiled. When a flag is too worn and torn to display, it should be destroyed.

It is important that teachers know the history of the flag in order to answer questions children may ask. Young children can be very enthusiastic about flags, especially if they live on a base where they may see the American flag everyday. Although young children cannot be expected to memorize the pledge or understand its total meaning, they will still profit from hearing it spoken by others. Most young children will enjoy the occasional experience of standing with their right hand over the heart in respect for the flag as they repeat the pledge.

2. <u>BASIC UNDERSTANDINGS</u>.

Flags often stand for places where people live.

We respect and look at the United States flag when we pledge allegience and sing the National Anthem.

Flags can tell us what way the wind is blowing.

Flags can warn us of danger.

Flags have bright colors.

Flags may make you feel proud.

Flags' designs have many different shapes.

Flags can tell us something about the people for whom they stand.

Flags should be handled with care.

Flags are raised before ball games, in the morning, etc.

Flags are lowered halfway when someone important dies.

3. WAYS OF INTRODUCING THE SUBJECT TO CHILDREN.

Bring an American flag into the classroom and ask children to tell you all they know about the flag. This can give you valuable information on what children know and what you need to help them find out about the flag.

Take the children on a walking trip to participate in the flag raising ceremony on base.

Call attention to the American flag if there is one in the center. Have each child make his/her own flag.

4. VOCABULARY.

Flag
Respect
Parade
Red
White
Blue
Rectangle
Stars
Stripes
Raise
Lower
Care for
Ceremony

5. ACTIVITIES FOR GROUP TIME.

Music.

The following songs could be played during large group activity for children to sing and appreciate.

"This Land is Your Land"

"I'm a Yankee Doodle Dandy"

"Battle Hymn of the Republic"

"Yankee Doodle"

"America"

"God Bless America"

NOTE: Young children should not be expected to learn all the words to the above songs. However, with a lot of repetition, children can recognize the different patriotic songs.

Wave Our Flag (Tune: "Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush")

This is the way we wave our flag
Wave our flag
Wave our flag
This is the way we wave our flag
So proudly in the morning.

Second verse
This is the way we raise our flag

Third verse
This is the way we salute our flag

Be creative, make up your own words.

Finger Plays and Poems

THE FINGER BAND

The Finger Band is coming to town, Coming to town, coming to town. The Finger Band is coming to town, So early in the morning.	(Fingers behind back, speaking softly, gradually louder as they are brought to the front.)
This is the way they wear their hats, Wear their hats, wear their hats. This is the way they wear their hats, So early in the morning.	(Hand on head to show hats.)

This is the way they wave their flags, (Waving motion with
Wave their flags, wave their flags, hands.)
This is the way they wave their flags,
So early in the morning.

This is the way they beat their drums, (Beating motion with
Beat their drums, beat their drums. hands.)
This is the way they beat their drums,
So early in the morning.

FIVE LITTLE FLAGS

Five little flags were waving in the breeze (One hand up)
And it's these five flags
That the wind likes to tease
For it tosses them up (Fingers flutter up)
And it tosses them down, (Fingers flutter down)
Before it decides
To move swiftly along. (Hand moves swiftly along)

BEAT THE DRUM

Boom, boom, (Clap hands on each "Boom")
Beat the drum.
Boom, boom,
Here we come,
Boom, boom,
Do not lag.
Boom, boom,
Wave the flag. (Flag is four fingers on one hand held together, thumb resting on palm.

"Five Little Flags" and "Beat the Drum" used with permission from Finger Frolics: Finger Plays for Young Children. Second edition Liz Cromwell and Dixie Hibner, 1976 Partner Press, Box 124, Livonia MI 48152.

THE FLAG GOES BY
By Henry Holcomb Bennett

Hats off!
Along the street there comes
A blare of buggles, a ruffle of drums,
A flash of color beneath the sky:
Hats off!
The flag is passing by!

Hats off!
Along the street there comes
A blare of bugles, a ruffle of drums;
And loyal hearts are beating high:
Hats off!
The flag is passing by!

From The Home Book of Verse. Burton Egbert Stevenson. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1953. Used with permission.

Stories and Games

Tell a story about Betsy Ross.

History is not clear on the origin of our nation's first flag. Some historians believe the story of Betsy Ross to be a legend so you can simply tell the children that this could have happened.

For children to get maximum benefit from the story as related here, get help from someone else. Two older children might visit and act out the story while you read it. Or you can do it alone by wearing first a Betsy Ross hat, then a general's hat. Make props as shown following the story.

BETSY ROSS AND THE FLAG

Betsy was busily working in her upholstery shop. As she looked up from her sewing, she saw through the window a coach and four horses stop in front of her little brick house.

She hurried to open the door and, to her surprise, saw General George Washington coming up the stairs. She curtsied and said, "What a pleasure to meet you, General Washington."

"Mrs Ross, the Congress has asked that I come to talk with you about an important matter," the General said.

Betsy asked him to be seated in her back parlor. She listened to General Washington as he told her that a new flag for the nation was needed. He took from his pocket a sketch of the kind of flag he wanted--a square flag with red and white stripes and 13 white stars scattered over a blue square in the corner.

Betsy studied the sketch carefully. Then she said, "Wouldn't it be better, General Washington, if the flag were not square, but a rectangle? This would make it longer than wide so that it could stream in the breeze."

"Yes, of course, Mrs Ross. That would be a better shape," said the General.

"And would it not be better to put the 13 stars in a design, like lines or a circle?" she asked.

"A good idea," he said. "We'll put them in a circle."

Betsy was growing bolder. "I see from your sketch that you wish to have six-pointed stars, sir. May I suggest five-pointed stars to go on our nation's new flag?"

"Wouldn't such a star be hard to cut out?" Washington asked. Betsy reached for her scissors. She made several folds in a square of paper and, with two snips of her scissors, had a perfect five-pointed star. "Splendid," he said. Then he took the first sketch from Betsy, turned the paper over and made another sketch. This time he used all three of her suggestions.

Next day, Betsy Ross began sewing together the red and white stripes. Then she stitched onto the blue the 13 white five-pointed stars in a circle. After many days of work, there was finished our nation's first flag.

From the Texas Day Care, Bicentennial for Children, State Department of Public Welfare, John H. Reagan Building, Austin, Texas 78701, July 1976, Number 46. Used with permission.

Stories and Games (Contd).

Play "Guess What?" flag riddles. The teacher describes something about the flag and children guess. For example, "I'm red, white, and blue. What am I?"..."I'm yellow and have five points. What am I?"..."Some people say I designed the first flag for our country. Who am I?"

Cooking.

Make paint brush cookies. Prepare your favorite sugar cookie recipe. Roll and cut cookies into star and flag shapes. Paint each cookie with "paint" made from 1 egg yolk, 1/2 tsp water, and food coloring. Use 1 egg yolk for each color that you will need. Put a small brush into each color and let children decorate their cookies. Bake as directed in recipe. These colorful cookies are fun to make.

Large Muscle Activities.

March to music, swinging arms and saying "left--right--left--right--etc." Use Hap Palmer's record albums: "Patriotic and Morning Time Songs and Mod Marches," available from Educational Activities Inc, Freeport, NY 11520.

Wave scarves, crepe paper streamers, and flags to promote gross motor development.

Pretend to be flags and sway to music.

Have a parade using flags made by the children. The teacher can beat a makeshift drum or use a portable tape recorder with marching music while the children march and wave their flags.

March to the "Marching Song:" "Oh, when we march...and sing a song...Oh when we march and sing a song...Oh, don't you want to be in the number when we march and sing a song." (Tune of "When the Saints Go Marching In.")

Other Experiences

Go on a field trip to the base flag pole to watch the flag raised and lowered.

Visit any government building where a large United States flag is displayed.

Go on a field trip to changing of the guard.

Have Air Force personnel (example: color guard members) come to the center to talk about their role with the flag and flag etiquette.

Routine Times.

At snack time bake and frost star shaped cookies.

Line up and march to outdoor play.

Have a small flag ceremony one morning per week.

6. ACTIVITIES FOR INTEREST CENTERS.

Science or Discovery Center.

Have children design or make a model of their Air Force base in the sand box (after having taken a field trip around the base). They can cut or make their own flag or models of the American flag to be part of the model.

Have children make their own boats and also make flags for their boats. They can "sail" their boats in the water table.

Have children experiment with taking deep breaths and blowing on pieces of paper, feathers, or small flags.

Ask children to blow in different ways, i.e., softly, hard, gentle, etc. Talk about what their flags do when they blow in a certain way.

Dramatic Play Center.

Children can role play flag raising ceremonies or other activities related to flag etiquette.

NOTE: Be careful that children do not "play" with the flag. Keep the United States flag in a special place each day.

Reading and Listening Center.

Play a tape of music used for reveille and retreat. Children can raise their own flags when they hear reveille and lower them for retreat.

Sequence stories can be told to the children relating raising the flag to begin the day and lowering the flag to end the day.

Flannel board stories can be told about different kinds of flags; for example, the flags used to call attention to different places.

Art Center.

Tempera paint with red, white, and blue paints.

Do paper tearing of red, white, and blue paper to make a flag.

Paste star stickers on flag outlines.

Children can design their own flag to tell something about themselves.

Child can make a travel log and cut and paste the flags of the countries and/or states in which they have lived.

Make a flag mobile by using a wire coat hanger and different flags of countries in which the children have lived.

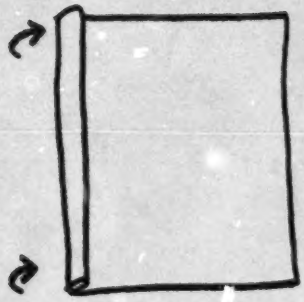
Roll and cut star shapes from playdough using cookie cutters.

Provide templates for children to draw around to make stars or flags.

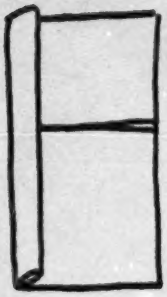
Cut out a picture of an American flag and paste it onto a piece of lightweight cardboard. Cut into puzzle pieces (the number of pieces will depend on the skills of your children). Ask children to put the flag together.

Make simple flags so each child who is interested can have one. Use a square cut from butcher paper, computer

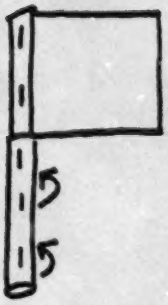
paper, or a paper bag. Expect the flag to be about 1/4 the size of the square.



Beginning on one side fold a 1-inch strip over and over.



Stop when folds reach center of paper. Cut unfolded paper as shown.



Wrap lower half of paper around folds as shown. Staple to form flag pole. (You may want to cover staples with scotch tape to protect little fingers.)

Let the children color their flags as they choose. Then the flags will be truly the children's flags.

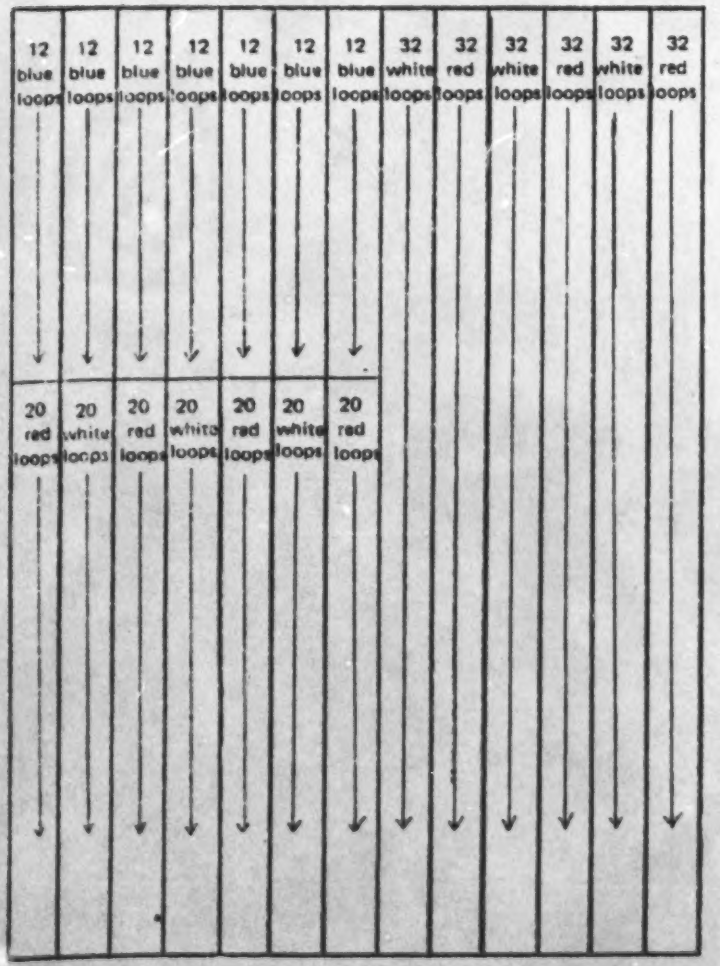
MAKE A PAPER CHAIN FLAG

Children can make this flag as shown with a minimum of assistance. You may want to make one for younger children and present it to them as something you had fun doing for them.

MATERIALS Heavy paper cut into strips 6" x 1-1/2"
168 white strips
188 red strips
84 blue strips

Curtain rod, dowling or anything 30" long which will support the flag.

Finished flag about 25-1/2" x 36"



Proceed by following the diagram so that strips are of equal length and in color sequence.

Slip the top loop of each completed chain over the rod until all 13 stripes are in proper order.

Cut out white stars about the size shown below to make a "first flag" or 50 smaller stars to make a flag of today. Paste stars on blue field.

Hang flag where light shines through or where a breeze flutters the chains.

Young children like to paste strips and stars. Don't dampen their fun by expecting too much!

From the Texas Day Care, Bicentennial for Children, State Department of Public Welfare, John H. Reagan Building, Austin, Texas 78701, July 1976, Number 46. Used with permission.

7. TEACHER RESOURCES.

Pictures and Displays.

Independence Day (David C. Cook).

David C. Cook Publishing Co.,
850 N. Grove Avenue,
Eglin IL 60120.

"Our Flag" (full color filmstrip, 9 minutes, approximate price $13.00, BA Order Number 361-1.)

Society for Visual Education, Incorporated (SVE)
Department BA
1345 Diversity Parkway
Chicago IL 60614

"Children of North America" (Set of eight study prints, approximately $12.00, BASP Order Number 134.)

Society for Visual Education, Incorporated
Department BA
1345 Diversity Parkway
Chicago IL 60614

Poster--"Flags of the United Nations Member States" (Sales number 67.1.7)

United Nations
799 United Nations Plaza
New York NY 10017

Childcraft - The How and Why Library--Holidays and Customs, Volume 9.

World Book - Childcraft International Inc.
Merchandise Mart Plaza
Chicago IL 60654

Flag stickers available at local base exchange or stationery/card shop.

Red, white, and blue party items (fans, flags, bells, streamers) can be ordered through (write Amscan for catalog):

Amscan, Inc
South Road
Harrison NY 10528

For interesting facts about the flag write to:

American Director
VFW
406 West 34th Street
Kansas City MO 64111

Ask for "Etiquette on Stars and Stripes," ten short flag stories, questions and answers on the United States flag. This information is free but you must enclose a long, self-addressed envelope.

Books

Flags of American History.

David D. Crouthers
Maplewood, New Jersey:
Hammond Incorporated. 1973